



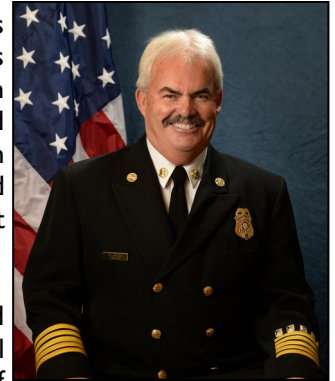
## Annual Newsletter

# Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District

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After several years of drought, it is comforting to write this update today with rain falling outside my office. While it is certainly a pleasant change, we in Santa Barbara still live in one of the most active wildfire environments in the United States and the effects from the drought are still very much with us. This year will mark the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District, one of the most progressive programs of its kind in the United States.



Over the past 10 years the Assessment District has chipped more than 3,000 tons of vegetation through our annual chipping program. We have cleared over 160 miles of roadways through our road clearance program and treated over 125 acres of flammable vegetation through vegetation management. We have also evaluated over 400 individual properties to assess potential defensible space improvements.

These are impressive numbers. It is so important to take the long view when looking at the work of the Assessment District. This is the work of one decade. How much of an impact will this work have on the survivability of our neighborhoods if we continue this work over several decades?

Later in this letter you will be able to look at the results of a study of the Assessment District done by UCSB's Bren School of Environmental Science and Management. We worked with a group of Bren graduate students and their professors to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and areas where we might improve.

We are very proud of the work done in the Assessment District and our partnership with all of you who live within it. We encourage you to call our office to request a defensible space assessment. We want to work with you to make your property as fire resistant as possible and look forward to another decade of fire safety improvement in the Assessment District.

*Patrick J. McElroy*

## The Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District

Properties in the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones of the City of Santa Barbara High Fire Hazard Areas are at higher risk of damage from wildfires due to their topography, climate and amount of combustible vegetation present. The Assessment District provides property owners within these high fire risk areas additional fire prevention services to reduce the severity and damage from wildfires. These services include: Defensible Space Evaluations, Vegetation Road Clearance, our annual Chipping program and Vegetation Management.

### Santa Barbara County Fire History

Year	Fire Name	Acres	Homes Lost
1955	Refugio	84,770	Several
1964	Coyote	67,000	100+
1971	Romero	14,538	4
1977	Sycamore	805	234
1977	Hondo	10,000	0
1979	Eagle Painted	4,530	5
1990	Cave	4,900	524
1993	Marre	43,864	0
2002	Sudden	7,160	0
2004	Gaviota	7,440	1
2007	Zaca	240,207	0
2008	Gap	9,445	0
2008	Tea	1,940	238
2009	Jesusita	8,733	80
2016	Sherpa	7,474	0
2016	Rey	32,606	0
2016	Canyon	12,518	0

## 2017 Defensible Space Chipping

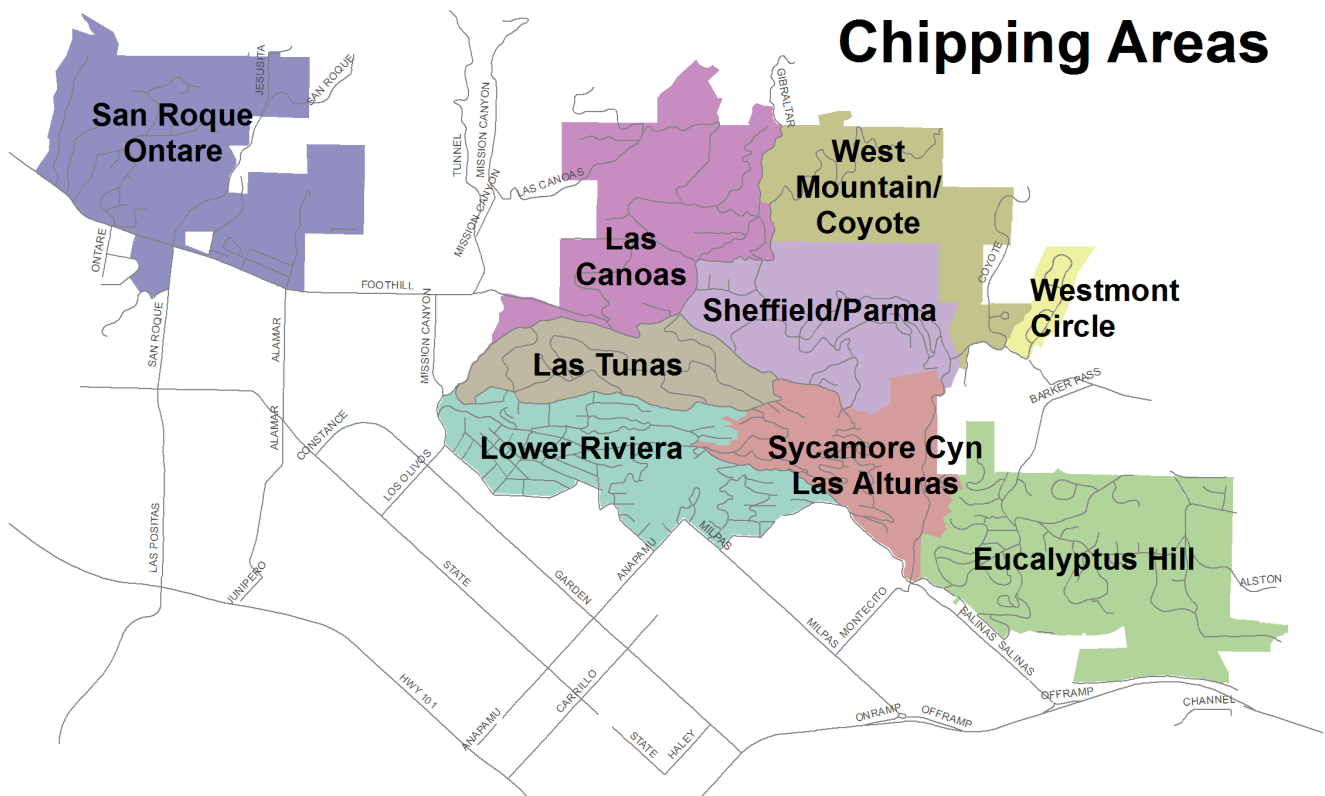
Sheffield/Parma	February 27
Las Canoas	March 13
Eucalyptus Hill	March 27
Sycamore Canyon/Las Alturas	April 10
Lower Riviera	April 24
San Roque/Ontare	May 1
Las Tunas	May 15
Circle/Westmont	May 30
West Mountain/Coyote	June 5

### Exotic pest plants that **will NOT** be chipped include:

Arundo • All species of ivy •  
Castor bean • Fennel •  
All species of broom • Ice plant  
Tobacco weed  
Any type of grass • Tamarisk  
Any kind of Bamboo

*Please put your cut vegetation out on roadways **no sooner than two weeks** and **no later than the day** your chipping area is scheduled to begin (second passes will not be made).*

Please refer to the map of chip areas below. For further detail visit our website or call us at 965-5254



## Chipping Instructions

Chipping services are provided to encourage property owners to create defensible space and provide a cost effective way to dispose of cut material.

As part of the City's environmental efforts, our goal is to re-use 99% of all chipped material. To achieve this goal we need your help. If you can use chips on your property please contact us at 965-5254. A load of chips is approximately 14 cubic yards. Partial loads are not available.

The chipping instructions (right) outline the specific requirements. Vegetation that does not meet these requirements will not be chipped and will be left on site. The property owner will be responsible for the legal disposal of any material that cannot be chipped.

### Chipping Instructions

- Cut vegetation should be laid out in a pile along the street outside the drivable roadway.
- The cut end of all vegetation must face the street so we can easily handle the material.
- Brush should be left in long lengths (4-7 feet). This makes it is much easier to chip.
- Cut branches should be no greater than 10 inches in diameter.
- Material in plastic bags will not be picked up.
- Twine or string must not be used to tie vegetation.
- Rocks or other debris will not be chipped.
- Long piles OK as long as they are not over 4 feet in height.
- Old dead vegetation that has been lying around for years will not be chipped (this type of vegetation damages chipper blades).
- Pine needles or other leaf litter cannot be chipped.
- Piles pushed or moved by mechanical means, i.e. tractor, will not be chipped.
- Grasses, palm fronds, succulents or agaves will not be chipped.

## Road Clearance

### What is Road Clearance and why is it so important?

Vegetation Road Clearance is one of the programs provided within the Assessment District in order to reduce the overall amount of flammable and overgrown vegetation along roadways. Flammable vegetation along roadways creates hazardous conditions, especially during evacuations. Burning vegetation near roads can force the closure of important evacuation routes. This can impede the ingress of first responders and the egress of residents leaving an area under evacuation. It is important to maintain the vegetation bordering roadways near your home throughout the year.





## Defensible Space Evaluations

### What is involved in a Defensible Space Evaluation?

During a Voluntary Defensible Space Evaluation we meet on site with you and walk around your property. We will discuss your current landscaping, exterior building construction, assess its current condition for things that are beneficial as well as any additional interior improvements that can be made.



### What is Defensible Space?

Defensible Space is the landscaped area around your home that is maintained to reduce the fire danger to structures and your property. A good defensible space area is key in providing a buffer between an approaching wildfire and can make the difference between saving or losing your home. .



### Defensible Space Tips

**Reduce Fire Ladders:** Separate and space your plants both horizontally and vertically.

**Reduce Ignition Sources:** Embers may blow miles ahead of the fire. Frequently check and remove leaves and debris from roofs and gutters. Check under decks and porches, deck furniture, play/storage structures, doormats, and potted plants.

**Trees:** Remove branches from the ground a minimum of 6 feet or 1/3 the total height of the tree. Remove all dead branches.

**Brush:** Remove dead fuel and limb up 2 feet from the ground. Keep separation between shrubs, brush and trees.

**Grass:** Mow down to 4 inches from the ground.

**Debris Piles:** Do not pile wood chips or mulch on your property. Spread and maintain to a depth not exceeding 4-6 inches. Compost should be kept in an appropriate container.

**Ornamental Plants:** Should be irrigated, maintained and pruned year-round.

**Firewood:** Make sure any firewood piles are neatly stacked and more than 30 feet away from any structures.

### Defensible Space and Bird Nesting

Nesting and breeding birds are impacted by vegetation removal. Bird nesting season occurs between April 1st through July 30th when defensible space work is being completed. To protect nesting and breeding bird populations a qualified biologist should be contacted to evaluate potential impacts.



**For a Voluntary Defensible Space Evaluation please call 965-5254**

## Ember Intrusion

- The City's "Defensible Space Clearance Requirements" mandate the clearance of flammable vegetation from any structure and public or private street that is on or that borders your property.
- The requirements for defensible space vary based on your wildland fire hazard zone.
- There are two fire hazard zones within the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District;
  - **Extreme Foothill Zone** -  
150 feet of defensible space is required.
  - **Foothill Zone** -  
100 feet of defensible space is required.

Your property is required to be in compliance with the City of Santa Barbara Municipal Code, Chapter 8.04 by June 15 of this year, and is required by law to stay in compliance year-round.



One of the reasons homes can be lost during wildfires is when embers generated during wildfires enter vents, crawlspaces and rain gutters. It is critical to keep all vents and openings covered by a 1/8" mesh or State Fire Marshal approved vents that prevent ember intrusion, in addition to keeping your rain gutters clear of leaf litter year-round.

## Using Mulch

Santa Barbara is currently experiencing the most severe drought in its history. As a result, many homeowners have opted to scale back landscape vegetation and remove lawns, replacing them with mulched landscape. It is important that homeowners make sure to apply mulch no thicker than 4 inches and spread it at least 10-15 feet away from the home to reduce the danger of embers blowing against the structure during a wildfire.



## Patio Furniture

Wooden and plastic patio furniture left outside during a wildfire can pose a threat to your home if embers land or ignite cushions or wood. Winds generated by a wildfire can blow burning material against the structure and spread fire to other parts of the property. We recommend homeowners reduce the amount of flammable furniture on decks and around the home and to remove and store patio cushions during an evacuation.





## Bren School Study

In 2015/16 a team of graduate students at the Bren School of UCSB conducted an analysis of the High Fire Hazard Areas within the City and within the Assessment District to better understand its effectiveness. Additionally, their study polled residents to evaluate the Assessment District and its services so we can improve our programs to better suit the community's needs. To determine these metrics the Bren students developed a survey that was mailed to all residents within the Assessment District and the Coastal High Fire Hazard Areas. Using the information provided on the returned surveys they were able to analyze and interpret the data and presented it to City Council in May of 2016.

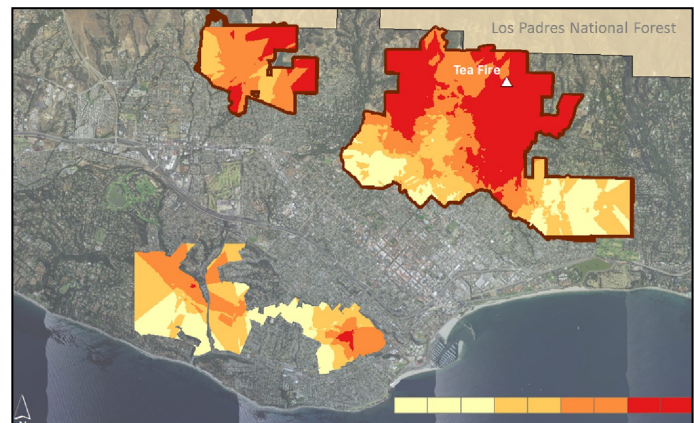
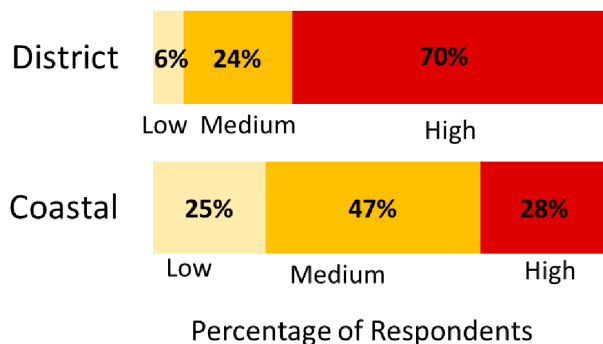
### Survey Results

More than 400 people responded to the 16 question survey within the Assessment District, a total of roughly 14% of the all residence. The results are very encouraging with 80% of residents approving of the Assessment District and 72% agreeing that it makes a safer community by reducing the impact of wildfires. Our future goals will be to improve these figures even more to better serve the community.

**80%** currently approve of the district!

**72%** agree it creates a safer community!

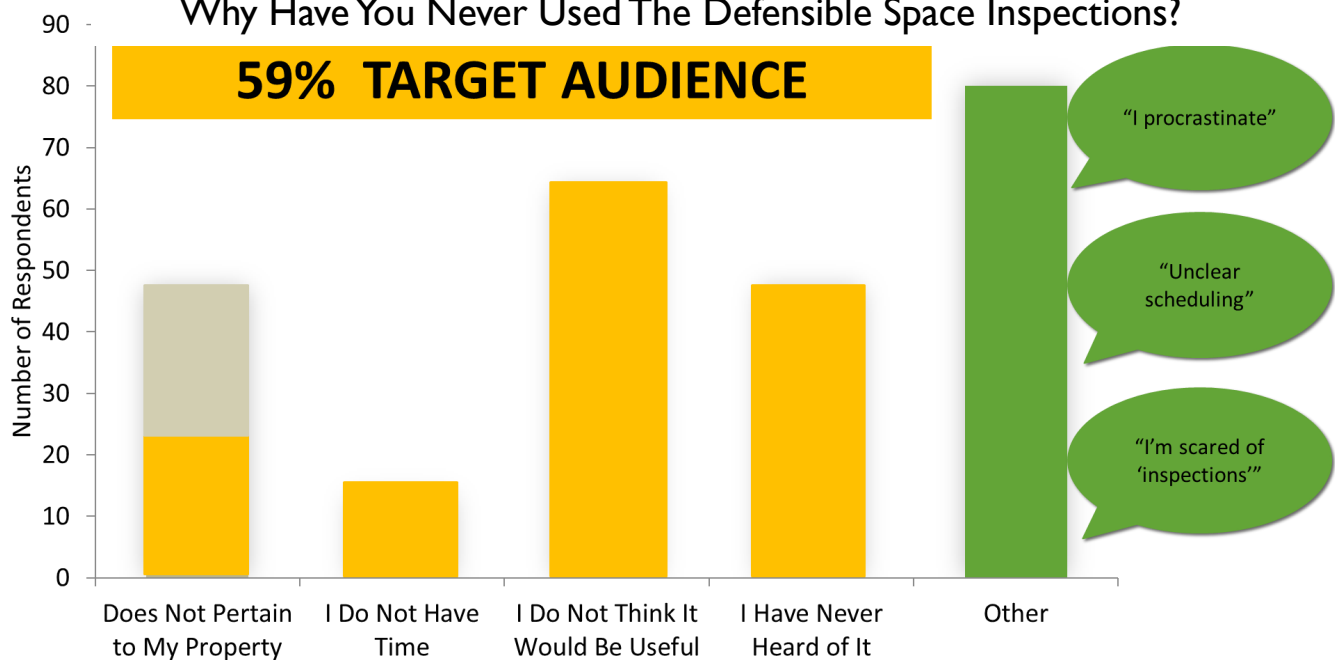
### Perceived Fire Risk



One of the questions on the survey asked: ***What do you think the level of fire risk is at your residence?***

The above results show that 70% of residents within the Assessment District perceive their fire risk as High with the remaining 30% as Low or Medium. It's important to remember, that the entire Assessment District and Coastal Zones are designated **High Fire Hazard Areas**, so in reality, all of the shaded areas of this map should be red, representing high fire risk. This shows that despite the periodic wildfires these Assessment District areas have experienced, there is still a lack of awareness of the true fire risks that wildfire poses to residents.

## Why Have You Never Used The Defensible Space Inspections?



One of the most important programs within the Assessment District is the Defensible Space Evaluations offered year round to all residents at no additional cost. The survey results indicate there are many people who live within the Assessment District that understand the risk that fire poses to their home, yet they have not taken advantage of the most important service provided to them.

It is imperative for us to convey the importance of having your property evaluated by the Fire Department to give you the knowledge and tools needed to improve and maintain an effective defensible space area around your home.

Defensible Space Evaluations are in no way an enforcement or penalty based inspection. We will work to accommodate scheduling evaluations during the week. Not having the time or procrastinating is not only an unacceptable excuse, it could have very dangerous consequences when a wildfire burns through the area.

### Applying What We Learned

Thanks to the outstanding work provided by the Bren School we will be able to apply the analysis of the survey to better the Assessment District for years to come. We have already implemented changes to our programs based on their recommendations and will continue to use their findings to improve our services. We would like to thank the graduate students (right), the Bren School at UCSB and the Santa Barbara Fire Safe Council for all of their support on this project and helping to making it possible.



UCSB Bren School Graduate Students  
Nico Alegria, Juli Matos, Sarah McCutcheon



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA  
FIRE DEPARTMENT

**SBFD Website**

[www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/  
WFSAD](http://www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/WFSAD)

**SBFD Facebook**

[www.facebook.com/  
SantaBarbaraCityFire](http://www.facebook.com/SantaBarbaraCityFire)

**Visit our Blog!**

<http://WFSAD.blogspot.com/>

Thank you for your  
continual support.  
Since 2006 we've:

**Chipped** more than  
3000 tons of vegetation  
through our annual  
chipping program

**Cleared** 160 miles of  
roadways through our  
road clearance program

**Treated** 125 acres of  
flammable vegetation  
through vegetation  
management

**Evaluated** over 400  
properties to assess  
potential defensible  
space improvements

City of Santa Barbara  
Fire Department  
925 Chapala Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

## Looking to the Future

As we celebrate our 10th year of the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District it is important to reflect on the importance of working together as a community to make Santa Barbara a more wildfire ready City. By working together we can continue to be ever vigilant of the threat wildfire poses to our community and continually improve defensible space areas within the community.

The success of the Assessment District depends on you and your neighbor's cooperation in order to be a wildfire safe community. If you have any questions or recommendations for how we can better serve the community of the Assessment District, please contact us. We will be happy to listen to your comments and suggestions.

We thank you for your continual support of the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District and its programs.

**YOUR ASSESSMENT DOLLARS PROVIDE FOR:**  
Vegetation Management Projects • Defensible Space Evaluations • Vegetation Chipping  
Public Education & Outreach • Vegetation Road Clearance  
Phone Number 805-965-5254